DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 754 EA 032 049

AUTHOR	Edmonson, Stacey; Fisher, Alice
TITLE	Aspiring Administrators: Promoting Reflective Leadership Practices.
PUB DATE	2002-03-00
NOTE	14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (57th, San Antonio, TX, March 9-11, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Education; Critical Thinking; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Leadership Training; Meditation; *Self Congruence; Self Evaluation (Individuals)
IDENTIFIERS	*Reflective Practice; *Texas

ABSTRACT

With the emphasis on standards in education, maintaining an educational program that meets these standards and is yet fulfilling and meaningful to future educational professionals can be challenging. The faculty at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) is implementing such a program through the use of reflective practice. Reflectivity, in this context, can be defined as focused meditation and has been recommended as a worthwhile skill for professionals to develop. At SHSU, the use of reflection writing is encouraged in all courses. Using reflections in coursework allows students to internalize their learning. It also causes them to realize how the content presented in class is relevant to their role as school administrator. They must not only describe what they have learned in assignments and examinations, but also apply that knowledge in reflecting how this learning affects them. All students must turn in a portfolio as a graduation requirement that must contain an activity from their coursework and a corresponding reflection. Such reflective practice allows university professors to see how well students have internalized the core components of the program. Using reflective practice to assess standards is a method that is easy to implement and highly beneficial for all stakeholders. (Contains 13 references.) (RT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

EA

ED 470 754

Aspiring Administrators: Promoting Reflective Leadership Practices

Stacey Edmonson, Ed.D.
Sam Houston State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling
Huntsville, Texas 77341-2119
(936) 294-1752

Alice Fisher, Ed.D.
Sam Houston State University
Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling
Huntsville, Texas 77341-2119
(936) 294-4349

Paper presented for the
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Annual Conference

San Antonio, Texas
March, 2002

EA 033 045

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. EDMONSON

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Aspiring Administrators: Promoting Reflective Leadership Practices

With the heavy emphasis on standards in education, maintaining an educational program that meets these standards and is yet fulfilling and meaningful to future educational professionals can be challenging. Through the use of reflective practice, the faculty at Sam Houston State University are successfully implementing such a program – one that meets the state of Texas' rigorous standards for school administrators, one that meets NCATE's standards for educator preparation programs, and one that meets the unique needs of all students.

Understanding Reflection

Reflectivity can be defined as focused meditation and has been recommended as a worthwhile skill for professionals to engage (Neufeldt, Karno, & Nelson, 1996). Cooper and Boyd (1998) wrote, "Reflection means focusing on thinking and understanding and not just on what you did or are doing. Good learners think about their own thinking; they reflect in action, for action, and about action" (p. 57). According to Rolheiser and Stevahn (1998), decisions based upon reflective analysis cannot be classified as random but, rather, as deliberately conceived. A growing body of research indicates that reflective practice is a valid process for bringing about desired reform in educational institutions (Biggs, 2001; Campoy, 2000; Drake & McBride, 2000; L. W. Kahne & Westheimer, 2000).

The concept of reflective practice has an historical basis in the writings of Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin (Imel, 1992). Although Dewey's work built on that of much earlier Eastern and Western philosophers including Buddha, Plato, and Lao Tzu (York-Barr, Sommers, Chere, & Montie, 2001). Even though each of the above maintained that experience is the foundation of learning, they also argued that reflection is essential for learning to occur (Imel, 1992).

Reflection enables individuals to focus on their concerns, develop personal insights regarding their work, and aids them or their colleagues in the improvement of professional practice (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996). It provides a medium for individuals to unveil discrepancies between what they theorize and the actualization of theory (Imel, 1992). Moreover, the ensuing awareness has the potential to close the chasm between theory and practice. Merickel (1998) echoes this by writing, "It is through reflection the practitioner will utilize a repertoire of understandings, images, and actions to reframe a troubling situation so that problem solving actions are generated."

The literature yields many prescriptions for reflective practice. Biggs (2001) maintained that three steps must be implemented for effective institutional reflective practice: (a) verbalizing preferred theory, (b) continuously improving on present practice, and (c) negating hindrances to good teaching. Operating from a different perspective, Cooper and Boyd (1998) deemed the following circumstances to be critical for interactive reflection: (a) comprehend the diverse approaches accessible, (b) establish the collaborative conditions, and (c) establish methods of implementation. Schniedewind and Sapon-Shevin (1998) viewed the process from sill another angle when presenting criteria they judged essential for critical reflection. Schniedewind and Sapon-Shevin contend that sufficient time must be allocated for the process. Additionally, a climate of trust must be fostered wherein individuals comfort levels are expanded, and thus, providing fertile ground for open discussions, peer sharing, and other risk-taking functions. Moreover, the authors suggest that opportunities should be granted to the participants that allow them to apply their newfound knowledge or skills.

Brown and Irby (1997) professed that an administrative portfolio functions as a logical venue for the reflective process. The authors admitted that even though portfolio development

requires much time, energy, and a conscious effort, it is a viable tool for promoting self-analysis and meaningful professional growth. Assisting in this endeavor, a reflection cycle consisting of five steps was delineated by Brown and Irby:

1. Select. The principal must first select the artifacts most representative of the leadership goals or proficiencies that he or she is attempting to demonstrate....
2. Describe. A description of the circumstances, situation, or events related to the experience is included in this step. ...
3. Analyze. This step involves "digging deeper." The "why" of the selection of the artifact and the "how" of its relationship to the events, leadership issues or beliefs, circumstances, and/or decisions occur....
4. Appraise. The actual self-assessment occurs in Step 4 as the principal interprets the events, evaluates the impact and appropriateness of his or her action (s)....
5. Transform. This step holds the greatest opportunity for growth as the principal uses insights gained from reflection in developing plans designed to improve and transform practice. (p. 29-30)

York-Barr, et al., (2001) contend that reflective practice can develop at four stages. The initial stage is the individual stage wherein an educator is afforded opportunity to hone his/her educational expertise. Additionally, an individual is able to gain perspective, inspiration, and revitalize professional purpose at the individual stage.

During the second stage, reflection with partners, individuals pair with another person and are able to build on the benefits of stage one. Partners are able to gain confidence, social support, increase sense of surroundings, and relate to another person in the work arena.

Reflection in small groups, the third stage, goes further to enhance learning through interaction with a greater number of individuals. Because of the expanded numbers, this stage lends itself to improve school climate and social acceptance of colleagues. Hope and encouragement are fruits of stage three.

Fourth, schoolwide reflection is acclaimed by York-Barr, et al., (2001) to have the greatest potential for cross-campus improvement "through collective understanding, thinking, learning, and acting that result from schoolwide engagement" (p. 15). Schoolwide reflective practice can take place in a variety of ways. Meetings can be organized in cross-grade level or whole school groups. The groups can be based on disciplines, curriculum, or other areas of school reform. However, a common thread exists in all school-wide groups; members share a common purpose or learning objective.

Understanding Standards

Education in any state is governed by standards. In Texas these standards are handed down by the Texas Education Agency, and they include specific guidelines for all aspects of educational leadership – requirements for certification in the principalship, superintendency, or supervision. The five broad areas incorporated into Texas standards for educational leaders include

1. Learner-centered values and ethics of leadership: A principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity and fairness, and in an ethical manner.
2. Learner-centered leadership and campus culture: A principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students and shapes campus culture facilitating the

development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

3. Learner-centered human resources leadership and management: A principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by implementing a staff evaluation and development system to improved the performance of all staff members, selects and implements appropriate models for supervision and staff development, and applies the legal requirements for personnel management.
4. Learner-centered communications and community relations: A principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. Learner-centered organizational leadership and management: A principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students through leadership and management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
6. Learner-centered curriculum planning and development: A principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the design and implementation of curricula and strategic plans that enhance teaching and learning; alignment of curriculum, curriculum resources, and assessment; and the use of various forms of assessment to measure student performance.
7. Learner-centered instructional leadership and management: A principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing,

and sustaining a campus culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

These standards are used to govern all educational leadership programs in the state of Texas, and other states have similar sets of standards. It is the responsibility of the educator preparation program to comply with these standards and effectively implement a series of courses that will prepare students to master the skills outlined by the standards.

University educator preparation programs must also comply with a second set of standards, those set forth by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, better known as NCATE. These standards guide the program content and delivery of a university's education programs in much the same way as state standards do, and failure to meet these standards can ultimately result in a program's loss of NCATE accreditation. The standards outlined by NCATE are as follows:

1. Strategic leadership: The knowledge, skills and attributes to identify contexts, develop with others vision and purpose, utilize information, frame problems, exercise leadership processes to achieve common goals, and act ethically for educational communities
2. Instructional leadership: The knowledge, skills and attributes to design with others appropriate curricula and instructional programs, to develop learner centered school cultures, to assess outcomes, to provide student personnel services, and to plan with faculty professional development activities aimed at improving instruction

3. Organizational leadership: The knowledge, skills, and attributes to understand and improve the organization, implement operational plans, manage financial resources, and apply decentralized management processes and procedures

4. Political and community leadership: The knowledge, skills, and attributes to act in accordance with legal provisions and statutory requirements, to apply regulatory standards, to develop and apply appropriate policies, to be conscious of ethical implications of policy initiatives and political actions, to relate public policy initiatives to student welfare, to understand schools as political systems, to involve citizens and service agencies, and to develop effective staff communications and public relations programs

5. Internship: The internship is defined as the process and product that result from the application in a workplace environment of the strategic, instructional, organizational, and contextual leadership program standards. When coupled with integrating experiences through related clinics or cohort seminars, the outcome should be a powerful synthesis of knowledge and skills useful to practicing school leaders.

Subcomponents within these five areas include professional and ethical leadership; information management and evaluation; curriculum, instruction, supervision, and the learning environment; professional development and human resources; student personnel services; organizational management; interpersonal relationships; technology and information systems; community and media relations; educational law, public policy, and political systems; and internship.

Thus, standards clearly rule the world of educational leadership preparation programs.

Using Reflection to Assess Standards

In the preparation programs for principals and superintendents at Sam Houston State University, reflective practice is used throughout the program to meet the various standards set forth by both NCATE and the state. All coursework objectives and content are aligned with NCATE standards and with the state standards. Analysis of congruence between the Texas standards and the NCATE accreditation guidelines for advanced programs in educational leadership reflect a similar knowledge and skills base. This compatibility assures that Sam Houston State University's Educational Leadership program is in compliance with state and national standards. This analysis of congruence is available in written form and documents exactly how the program's current content meets both sets of standards.

So how does reflective practice factor in to meeting these standards? In the Department of Educational Leadership at Sam Houston State University, there are three important ways that reflection is used in meeting state and national standards. First, use of reflection writing is encouraged in all courses. A number of assignments and/or examinations in the educational leadership coursework follow Brown and Irby's (1997) reflection cycle. Students must not only describe what they have learned, but they must also apply that knowledge in reflecting how this learning affects them. Thus, using reflections in coursework allows students to internalize their learning; it also causes them to realize how the content presented in class is relevant to their future role as a school administrator.

Secondly, all students must turn in an academic portfolio in order to graduate with a master's degree in educational leadership from Sam Houston State University. Among other things, this portfolio must contain an activity from the student's coursework and a corresponding reflection; a minimum of one activity and reflection must be included for each Texas school

administrator standard. This portfolio and its reflections are carefully evaluated by the entire department before the student is approved for graduation. Reflective practice is used to determine if the student has adequately mastered and retained the knowledge and skills set forth in the required coursework. Students who can successfully reflect on what they have learned have clearly met the goals intended by state or national standards. Not only does reflective practice indicate whether the student has achieved mastery of the standards, this process also allows students to develop a portfolio of artifacts that they can then use as a job seeking tool for administrative positions.

The third way in which reflective practice is used by the educational leadership faculty at Sam Houston State University is through the required principal or superintendent internship. The internship is comprised of a number of specific required activities, each designed to specifically target administrative behaviors required by state standards. For each activity, the intern must describe what he/she did and then write a full reflection on the experience. Thus, by the completion of the internship, the student has written a large number of reflections on a variety of administrative experiences. As one student said, "This is the best things I could have done for myself. It really made me see all the things related to leadership I had done in my career."

Using reflections to measure standards is dually beneficial to the university as well as the student. Reflective practice allows university professors to see how well students have internalized the core components of the program. Likewise, students gain tremendously from the process as well. According to one student who is now a practicing administrator," I thought about reflection. I can reflect on my experiences, but without action coming from the reflection, the reflection is nothing more than a daydream." Reflection forces students to look closely at

themselves so that they can continually learn and improve their leadership skills. Thus, using reflective practice to assess standards proves to be a method that is easy to implement and highly beneficial for all stakeholders.

References

Biggs, J. B. (2001). The reflective institution: Assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Higher Education, 41, (3), 221-38.

Brown, G., & Irby, B. J. (1997). The Principal Portfolio. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Campoy, R. W. (2000). Teacher development: Fostering reflection in a poststructural era. Contemporary Education, 71, (2), 33-41.

Cooper, C., & Boyd, J. (1998). Creating sustained professional growth through collaborative reflection. In C. M. Brody, & N. Davidson (Eds.), Professional Development for Cooperative Learning Issues and Approaches (pp. 49-62). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Drake, F. D., & McBride, L. W. (2000). The summative teaching portfolio and the reflective practitioner of history. The History Teacher, 34, (1), 41-60.

Imel, S. (1992). Reflective practice in adult education, (ERIC Digest No. 122) ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education Columbus, OH. [On-line]. Available: http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed346319.html

Kahne, J., & Westheimer, J. (2000). A pedagogy of collective action and reflection: Preparing teachers for collective school leadership. Journal of Teacher Education, 51, (5), 372-83.

Merickel, M. L. (1998). The reflective practitioner. Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR [On-line]. Available: http://www.orst.edu/instruct/ed555/zone1/rp.htm

Lunenburg, F. C., & Ornstein, A. C. (1996). Educational Administration Concepts and Practices. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Neufeldt, S. A., Karno, M. P., & Nelson, M. L. (1996). A qualitative study of experts' conceptualization of supervisee reflectivity. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 43, 3-9.

Rolheiser, C., & Stevahn, L. (1998). The role of staff developers in promoting effective teacher decision-making. In C. M. Brody, & N. Davidson (Eds.), Professional Development for Cooperative Learning Issues and Approaches (pp. 63-78). Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Schniedewind, N., & Sapon-Shevin, M. (1998). Professional development for socially-conscious cooperative learning. In C. M. Brody, & N. Davidson (Eds.), Professional Development for Cooperative Learning Issues and Approaches (pp. 204-219). Albany, NY: State University of New York.

State Board of Education (1999). Texas Administrative Code. Chapter 241.15

York-Barr, J., Sommers,W. A., Chere, G. S., & Montie, J. (2001). Reflective Practice to Improve Schools. Thousnad Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Aspiring Administrators: Promoting Reflective Leadership Practices	
Author(s): Stacey Edmonson, Alice Fisher	
Corporate Source: Sam Houston State University	Publication Date: March, 2002

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1 ↑ ☑

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A ↑ ☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B ↑ ☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature: Stacey L Edmonson	Printed Name/Position/Title: Stacey Edmonson/Assistant Professor
Organization/Address: Sam Houston State University, Box 2119, Huntsville TX 77341	Telephone: 936 294 1752 FAX: 936 2943886
	E-Mail Address: Sedmonson@shsu.edu Date: 9/3/02

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor: N/A
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name: N/A
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

Higher Education

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4483-A Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, Maryland 20706

Telephone: 301-552-4200
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-552-4700
e-mail: info@ericfac.piccard.csc.com
WWW: http://ericfacility.org

EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)
PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THIS FORM ARE OBSOLETE.